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Review of Kim Potowski & Jason Rothman, eds. 'Bilingual Youth: Spanish in English-Speaking Societies'

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Bilingual Youth: Spanish in English-Speaking Societies. Kim Potowski & Jason Rothman (eds.). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 2011.

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The collection includes four main sections, geographically organized (United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia/New Zealand). Unlike many edited collections, this anthology does not include a detailed introduction by the co-editors. Instead, the co-editors offer a very brief preface to situate the volume and they allow an introductory essay by Suzanne Romaine and an afterward by Carol Klee to frame and contextualize the 12 contributions. This unconventional choice is refreshing, letting the contributions speak for themselves for the most part. The preface lays out the three foci that unite the volume, as evidenced by the title: the language practices of bilingual youth whose 'home language' or 'mother tongue' is Spanish and whose 'host community language' or 'national language' is English. While there is insufficient space in this review to offer a detailed review of each contribution or even each section, I will provide an overview of the contributions and an evaluation of the volume.

1. Introduction

After the co-editors' preface, the collection opens in earnest with Romaine's introductory essay, which explores the topic of identity in multilingual contexts and problematizes a straightforward language-identity link. It is a practical presentation of how situations that lead to multilingualism also affect and are affected by people's identities, how language is central to people's identity construction practices, and why this matters. This introductory essay opens the volume effectively, as it outlines some of the major theoretical and practical considerations in an approachable way for the reader, draws in examples from a variety of language contact situations, and ends on a concise but thoughtful contemplation of the survival of local languages and heterogeneity in the context of globalization and homogenization.

2. United States

Following Romaine's contribution is the first of four main sections; this first section examines language and identity among Spanish-English bilingual youth in the United States. Research on Spanish in the U.S. has a long history, which sets it apart

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in some ways from the other regions included in the book where inquiry into Spanish-English bilingualism is more recent and less abundant, as the co-editors acknowledge in the preface. The four contributions included in the United States section are varied and represent quite a range of research on Spanish-English bilingualism and identity, both theoretically and geographically: Ofelia García examines the agentive interactional practice of “translanguaging” among students and teachers in a two-way bilingual school; Kim Powtowski and Lillian Gorman investigate the role of bilingual language practices in the hybridization of the coming-of-age *quinceañera* tradition; Ileana Reyes explores ideologies behind the varied practices of first generation parents to maintain Spanish and develop literacy; and Guadalupe Valdés provides a case study of strategies for identity construction and language maintenance in the educational system. In the process of reading this section, we travel from the East Coast to the Midwest, to the Southwest and finally end on the West Coast, and we see examples of language and identity practices of Puerto Rican and Mexican bilinguals from the first to the third generation. While the Latina/o population in the U.S. is heterogeneous, and the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities are the two most-frequently groups studied, this section represents a diverse and interesting collection for such a small number of chapters.

3. Canada

Compared to the U.S. section, the Canadian and U.K. sections that follow are much more limited in length and scope, each consisting of two chapters. The two Canadian contributions are both related to language socialization and bilingual development, although they represent different geographical areas – eastern and western Canada – and different countries of origin of subjects – chiefly Mexico in the first study and Guatemala in the second. In the first chapter of the Canadian section, Ana T. Pérez-Leroux, Alejandro Cuza and Dannielle Thomas seek to discover what conditions promote successful intergenerational transmission of Spanish in a minority language context with limited support for the home language. While the effects of language attitudes on language maintenance or language use have often been studied for adults, they examine the influence of language attitudes on bilingual development, specifically family transmission, among younger subjects. The second contribution in the Canada section, by Martin Guardado, is a case study of language socialization and literacy practices in one Guatemalan immigrant family.

4. United Kingdom

The United Kingdom section follows with two chapters, both of which employ an experimental method in order to compare syntactic features of Spanish-English bilinguals in the U.K. with those of Spanish monolinguals in non-contact situations.

First, Marcela Cazzoli-Goeta and Martha Young-Scholten examine the effect of English contact on the preference for sentence initial non-nominatives (SINNs) in Spanish among Latino immigrants in the U.K. Second, Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes and Theodoros Marinis investigate the influence of external factors, such as home language use or years of Spanish education, on British Spanish-English bilingual speakers' performance on a test of the use of the so-called *personal a* in Spanish.

Cazzoli-Goeta & Young-Scholten's study, and to a lesser extent Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis' study, are certainly the weakest of the volume. In analyzing bilingual speakers' syntax, both Cazzoli-Goeta & Young-Scholten and Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis employ the method of comparing bilingual speakers to a monolingual control group, falling back into the narrative of deficit even when the data do not support it. This method has been critiqued for years, by Silva-Corvalán (1994) for example, even as she examined language attrition. As Bullock & Toribio (2011) recently pointed out, a research paradigm that is not only damaging to the perception of bilinguals and bilingualism, but is also quite likely inaccurate if the insufficiently examined notion of the 'monolingual control group' is interrogated and debunked. In the Cazzoli-Goeta & Young-Scholten contribution, for example, virtually nothing is revealed about the monolingual control group other than country of origin, age range and degree of English contact. The two bilingual groups in language contact situations, one 'high English contact' and the other 'low English contact,' in addition to differing with regards to English language contact, also differ in other important ways that have nothing to do with English contact – the 'low English contact' group consisted primarily of university lecturers and Spanish teachers, while the 'high English contact' group was made up of people working in housecleaning and childcare (we do not know about the socioeconomic status or education level of the monolingual control group). Thus, differences between the groups, which are attributed to English contact, could just as easily be due to speakers' level of education, continued contact with Spanish thanks to opportunities to travel to the home country, greater exposure to more formal registers of the language in written forms, or different orientations to or comfort with the experimental task. There could also be differences among speakers' L1 varieties, since they come from different countries of origin and do not share the language variety of the 'monolingual control group.'

5. Australia & New Zealand

The fourth main section of the collection consists of four contributions on Spanish English bilingual youth in Australia and New Zealand. These papers address the gap in the literature on Latin American immigration to the two countries: first, Criss Jones-Díaz presents an ethnographic analysis of attitudes toward Spanish and language learning among Latin American Australian youth in Sydney, emphasizing the important role of Spanish legitimization in the positive identity formation; next,

Mario Daniel Martín explores the relationship between official policy and majority rhetoric on immigration and language maintenance and the narratives of Spanish-English bilingual children across the several decades since 1965 within the Australian context, revealing a glaring disconnect between mainstream discourse and bilingual immigrants' lived experiences; following Martín, Cristina Poyatos Matas and Loredana CuatroNochez analyze patterns of language socialization and development of ethnolinguistic identity, particularly with regards to early schooling experiences, among Salvadorian children in Australia through retrospective ethnographic interviews with adults who had migrated as children between 1985 and 2002; and Ute Walker analyzes questionnaire data to examine the language maintenance strategies of immigrant families in New Zealand, highlighting the importance of community support in the maintenance of Spanish among Latin American immigrants given the lack of official support.

6. Afterword

Carol Klee's afterword artfully closes the volume in a way that, rather than wrap up the discussion, instead indicates that it is only the beginning. She notes that, when studying international migration, language and identity, between the two levels that tend to receive the bulk of researchers' attention – macro-level global forces and policies of nation states, and micro-level individual attitudes, decisions, and strategies – the meso-level, which is key to understanding migration outcomes, is too frequently overlooked. This level comprises social, symbolic and network ties with family, communities and organizations. She then proceeds to reflect in turn on the role that schools, communities and families play in supporting or undermining Spanish maintenance, concluding that in the absence of adequate school support in the cases highlighted in the volume, the meso-level network ties of home and community play an even more critical role.

7. Evaluation

In sum, *Bilingual Youth* is an excellent collection of research that investigates the topics of bilingualism, youth and identity from a variety of perspectives and approaches, as well as from a variety of Spanish-English language contact situations. The strength of this volume is found both in the rich composite created by the contributions' varied questions and in the differences between contact situations highlighted by the contributions. With some exceptions, the majority of the chapters use, at least to some degree, a case study method and an ethnographic approach; as a result, the majority of the contributions provide a rich, complex and nuanced picture of bilingualism and bilinguals that defies easy explanations and sweeping generalizations. It is crucially important that, as we recognize more and more how identity is constructed interactively and negotiated *in situ* and appreciate

how language varieties are a resource that speakers may use to 'do' identity in interaction, we do not attempt to wash out this complexity or gloss over these nuances. Throughout the majority of the volume the interconnected foci of bilingualism, youth and identity are explored without essentializing the complexity or watering down the richness, from García's detailed, engaging analysis of how very young bilinguals subvert the hegemonic division of English and Spanish in a bilingual program to construct a hybrid linguistic identity to Potowski and Gorman's fascinating exploration of how Latina adolescent girls' use Spanish as part of a performance of ethnic identity, from Jones-Díaz's acute examination of the concepts of habitus, field and capital in relation to youth's learning and maintaining of Spanish and creating a bilingual identity, to Martín's careful, worthy study of immigrants' narratives in dialogue with mainstream discourse on multilingualism, multiculturalism and immigration. Despite the weakness of the Cazzoli-Goeta & Young-Scholten contribution specifically and the U.K. section more generally, the depth and breadth of the volume as well as its unique focus on bilingual youth identities makes it a valuable contribution to the field.

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